

Appl. No. 09/536,577
Reply to Office Action of August 10, 2005

IN THE CLAIMS

Applicant respectfully declines to amend the claims at this time. For the Examiner's convenience, the currently pending claims are reproduced below:

1. (Previously Amended) A method of excising a compromised node from a community of nodes capable of information sharing comprising:

for each group in a plurality of top tier groups in a top level tier, encrypting a new traffic encryption key using a top tier-group specific key encryption key, wherein the plurality of top tier groups excludes a group that includes the compromised node;

broadcasting the new traffic encryption key to each of the plurality of top tier groups in the top level tier; and

within the group that includes the compromised node, recursively broadcasting the new traffic encryption key to groups of nodes at a succession of lower tiers, until the compromised node is excised, wherein recursively broadcasting comprises:

for each of the groups of nodes in the succession of lower tiers, each of the groups of nodes excluding a lower tier group that includes the compromised node, encrypting the new traffic encryption key using a lower tier-group specific key encryption key.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein each tier in a progression of lower tiers comprises a plurality of groups, one group of the plurality of groups including the compromised node, and wherein recursively broadcasting comprises:

for each tier in the succession of lower tiers, broadcasting the new traffic encryption key to a subset of the plurality of groups, such that the compromised node does not receive the new traffic encryption key.

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4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein recursively broadcasting comprises:
broadcasting the new traffic encryption key to a plurality of lower tier groups in a lower tier, the plurality of lower tier groups excluding a lower tier group that includes the compromised node; and

within the lower tier group that includes the compromised node, broadcasting the new traffic encryption key to a plurality of nodes in a lowest tier, wherein the plurality of nodes excludes the compromised node.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 4 wherein the compromised node is a node coupled to a wireless communications system.

7. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 4 wherein the compromised node is a node coupled to the Internet.

8. (Previously Amended) A method of operating a key management center to excise a compromised node comprising:

from a list of top tier key encryption keys, selecting a top tier key encryption key that does not correspond to a group that includes the compromised node;

encrypting a new traffic encryption key using the top tier key encryption key, to produce a first encrypted traffic encryption key;

broadcasting a message that includes the first encrypted traffic encryption key;

from a list of lower tier key encryption keys, selecting a lower tier key encryption key that does not correspond to the group that includes the compromised node;

encrypting the new traffic encryption key using the lower tier key encryption key, to produce a second encrypted traffic encryption key; and

broadcasting a message that includes the second encrypted traffic encryption key.

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9. (Original) The method of claim 8 further comprising repeating the actions in the method for all top tier groups except the group that includes the compromised node.

10. (Original) The method of claim 8 further comprising:
within the group that includes the compromised node, broadcasting the new traffic encryption key to a plurality of nodes excluding the compromised node.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10 further comprising:
within the group that includes the compromised node, broadcasting new tier group key encryption keys to the plurality of nodes excluding the compromised node.

12. (Previously Amended) A key management center comprising:
an encryption device; and
a storage device coupled to the encryption device, the storage device being configured to hold a hierarchy of tier-group specific key encryption keys.

13. (Previously Amended) The key management center of claim 12 wherein the hierarchy of tier-group specific key encryption keys comprises:
a lowest level tier in which each of a first plurality of tier-group specific key encryption keys is assigned to a corresponding node.

14. (Previously Amended) The key management center of claim 13 wherein the hierarchy of tier-group specific key encryption keys further comprises:
a next higher level tier in which each of a second plurality of tier-group specific key encryption keys is assigned to a corresponding group of nodes.

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15. (Previously Amended) The key management center of claim 13 wherein the hierarchy of tier-group specific key encryption keys further comprises:

a plurality of next higher level tiers wherein each of the plurality of next higher level tiers includes a separate plurality of tier-group specific key encryption keys, each of the separate plurality of tier-group specific key encryption keys being associated with a different plurality of tier-group specific key encryption keys on a next lower tier.